

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY



J. W. Scholl

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Very Sincerely Yours
J. W. Scholl

THE
LIGHT-BEARER
OF
LIBERTY.

BY
J. W. SCHOLL.



What the brain has thought, and the hands have
wrought,
And the soul has dreamed could be,
Is the only worth in the whole wide earth,
And the measure of life, for me!

—*The Author.*



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.. Index..

PREFACE.	PAGE.
AUTHOR'S ANNOUNCEMENT.	
THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY	I
THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.	45
JESUS OF NAZARETH.	79
MY CREED.	99
MY DUST.	113
FRAGMENT FROM UPUBLISHED MASQUE. . . .	117

A CORDON OF SONNETS.

CHRISTUS.	123
TRUTH, THE REDEMTOR.	124
FAITH.	125
ATONEMENT.	126
RESURRECTION.	127
THE EVERLASTING LIFE.	128
TRANSFIGURATION.	129
IMMORTALITY	130
CALVARY.	131
EKKLESIA.	132
GETHSEMANE.	133
OLIVET.	134
THE PARAKLETE.	135
HYPATIA.	136
TO A SERPENT.	137



THE BIRTH OF A GOD.	139
AGNOSTICISM.	140
THOUGHTS.	143
MY PIOUS COMFORTERS.	145

51-112

.. Preface ..



The human heart and the human brain
Are guides and sanctions enough for me,
For your blessed bibles and creeds are vain,
To the man that pants for liberty.



THE *raison d'être* of this little volume is found in the dictum of the Rev. Homer Wilber; "Men do not make poetry, it is made out of *them*." It is the incarnation of the rare moments in the poet's life, when the mind is at white heat and his heart beats like a trip-hammer. There is something inevitable about it.

The several poems, contained herein, will, the author trusts, speak for themselves. Some will make enemies; some, friends. Friends among those who find that the rags and patches of a theological system, though

PREFACE.

once considered royal purple woven in with threads of gold, leave them naked in the face of the universe, and who are striving to weave themselves a new garment whole and without a seam. Enemies among those conservatives, who constantly witness their own defeat but anathematize the victors ; who cling to the old sinking, barnacle-covered ship when all their fellow-passengers have taken to the life-boats ; who would die with the "faith of the fathers" rather than acknowledge that a new world of thought has arisen, with a new faith that leaves the greater mysteries as mysteries still, but gives full leash to reason.

It is not too much to hold, that any man who has kept abreast of Truth ; who has in his mental possession the chief facts of biblical criticism, of archæology, of history and especially the history of thought-systems, of astronomy, geology and psychology ; who has not stultified his mind by long indulgence of prejudices, must assent to the following propositions :

- (1) That the Bible is not a single book, but a Literature, containing many myths and legends and crude early views of the world, that it is not entirely consistent throughout, nor chronologically arranged, and that it is to be studied by the

PREFACE.

same methods and judged by the same standards which are applied to all other ancient literary remains.

(2) That the two-fold story of the creation in Genesis is inconsistent in itself, and cannot in either form be harmonized with the facts of geology and must be considered a myth incorporated into Hebrew tradition from extra-Hebrew sources still older.

(3) That the story of Adam and Eve and the Fall is simply a myth.

(4) That man has been proven to have existed on the earth, in Egypt, in France, in Denmark, in England, in Switzerland, and in America, for long ages before the biblical date of the creation of Adam and Eve.

(5) That the Deluge of Noah is a myth, and the preservation of all species of animals in the ark an impossibility.

(6) That the rainbow has existed wherever sunlight fell on falling rain and has refracted into a human eye, and that its first appearance at the subsidence of the Deluge is mythical.

PREFACE.

- (7) That the story of the confusion of tongues at Babel is mythical, and contrary to all known facts of philology.
- (8) That Satan has no real existence.
- (9) That there is no real hell of fire and brimstone.
- (10) That there is no unimpeachable evidence of the existence of angelic orders of cherubim and seraphim and the lesser servants of Jehovah, but that these were the necessary complements of a rude anthropomorphic god, who could not be everywhere at all times.
- (11) That "witch-craft" and "demoniac possession" are and always have been delusions or misnomers of diseased conditions.
- (12) That drought, pestilence, storms, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions, are never "divine visitations" or "satanic machinations", but always natural phenomena.
- (13) That prophecy was never specifically predictive.
- (14) That no part of the Bible claims for itself divine inspiration or inerrancy.

PREFACE.

- (15) That no miracles now take place, (using miracle in its accepted sense of a temporary annulment, change or reversal of the ordinary processes of nature.)
- (16) That the evidence of miracles in the past, (such as raising the dead, turning the shadow back on the dial-plate, making a metallic axe swim, feeding the multitude on the loaves and fishes, turning water into wine, etc.) is not sufficient to be convincing.
- (17) That there is no evidence for the efficacy of prayer in changing the course of nature, except in a limited perfectly natural way by its effect upon the person praying and upon the hearers, and this ought not be counted an exception.
- (18) That the idea of God is a natural human conception, and as men have become better, their notions of God have become better.
- (19) That the human race as a whole has steadily risen, and that any people's religion is a human product, largely an unconscious growth, that measures its elevation, and is never a revelation from without.

PREFACE.

(20) That the whole Universe was not originated and fitted up especially for the use and delight of man.

It is possible to hold these views, and yet be a factor in the best social, civil, ethical and religious life possible among men. Not one of the views negatived in these propositions is worth a fig to humanity, but the belief of all or most of them would make a mad-house of the human brain, and fill life with delirium. The moral health of mankind demands a clearing of the atmosphere, even though a storm may be the only means of clearing it.

The author has not been betrayed into wholesale libel of humanity. He leaves that to the Calvinist. He believes that men are generally honest, that their notions are wont to be honest, even when most absurdly untrue. They are to be pitied and helped to a better thought, not berated as fools and hypocrites. They need culture, but culture requires complete destruction of the untrue, and gives a negative cast to the labors of almost all liberals. Every move forward involves iconoclasm. But we are constantly confronted with the question, "What do you give us in place of what you take away?" We give but little, and are likely to give but

PREFACE.

little more. You have enough, good brother man, to guide you through all the lives you will ever have to live, if only you can be unfettered. You need nothing given you. You need rather have much taken away, much that encumbers you. You are a living thing, a bundle of instincts adapted more or less nearly to your environment by the long inheritance of the ages. These inborn instincts, guided by enlightened reason, are a thousandfold better guide to the high conduct of your life than all the parchments and papyri of the past.

The constructive or affirmative side of liberal thought can not be so distinctly religious, as that term is commonly understood, for most of what passes for religious, will not stand the test of clear thinking. But ethics, applied to public and private life, is re-enforced and made supreme. It may not be out of place to quote here the concluding paragraphs of an article published by the author several years since :

Man owes :

“ To the Universe, a willing submission to all laws, physical, mental, and moral, and an active, not merely passive, existence.

“ To himself, self-preservation, culture, happiness, and self-perpetuation.

PREFACE.

"To wife, chaste, exclusive love, personal liberty, and equal opportunities of life and development.

"To children, pure healthy bodies and minds, proper care and development in infancy, fullest preparation for an entrance upon all the rights and privileges of mature life, and wise counsel in all things.

"To fellow-men, unabridged rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and co-operation in securing mutual benefits.

"To the State, good citizenship, active effort in forming and executing just and equal laws, and conformity to all laws until by reformatory education public thought shall alter them.

"To the Past, a cherishing of all that is good in the social fabric, in philosophical, ethical, religious, political, and economic thought, and a rejection of all that is useless or evil.

"To the Future, all the progress of which he is capable. He should bequeath more than the legacy of the Past.

"To the race, everything. He owes self-culture, a full active life, a strong pure manhood, and a broad, catholic spirit in all things, that he may be a factor in the evolution of a crowning order of life."

PREFACE.

These constitute an ever-present authoritative code to the developed man.

But what of Faith, Worship, Prayer? Where have you placed these? They are but *attitudes* of the human spirit toward the great Unknown, the Infinite, the Universe.

And what of immortality? If there be no future of reward and retribution, what power will ethical law have over us? "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die!" This is but another form of the old question of sanctions. Belief in immortality has nothing necessarily to do with the moral acts of men. If there is a future state, it must be a complement to this state. A full complete earth-life must insure a fitting entrance upon the spirit-life. Our duties and opportunities all lie here. Our motives and sanctions are all here. If immortality is true, (and most of us believe it in some form) we will enter upon it prepared for all its opportunities and enjoyments. If it is but a beautiful dream of the ages, we shall go down to the dust, our bodies dissolving into the elements, our lives breathing out into nothing. We shall go to nothing dreadful. The mission of our life will be ended.

This of course will not seem a fair return for taking away the creeds and some

PREFACE.

of the unfounded or too slightly founded hopes of certain men, but let them remember that this is not done in a spirit of robbery or wanton cruelty. Most liberals have been *driven* to their position by the force of undeniable facts, reluctantly enough many times, but they have accepted the situation, with all its obloquy, with all the pains inflicted upon dearest friends, rather than stand before the world convicted of publicly fostering a system of thought which they privately believe false and pernicious. They are thoroughly honest, and leave to the pulpit the monopoly of indulging an advanced esoteric thought, yet teaching publicly a lower system adapted (forsooth) to less cultured minds. But meanwhile population and learning both are increasing faster than the pews are filling. And no wonder !

Why can not the pulpit escape the bondage of tradition, and resume its place in the van of human thought, a place usurped by the press, and now too often used in truckling to popular demands ?

It must stand for living thought, free inquiry, and cease maligning the honest worker and thinker. Until that time it must remain a decaying member of the social body, and become a menace and curse instead of

PREFACE.

a wholesome conservator and propagator of the best traditions of men. Let the church heed the many-voiced warnings of the last century.

The title-poem of this volume was written under the inspiration of the lectures of Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, and is offered as a tribute to him, whom many delight to recognize as the manly and eloquent friend of man, woman, and child, the champion of the oppressed, the titanic foe of superstition, the torch-bearer of intellectual liberty.

The other poems are a humble contribution to the cause for which the best blood has been spilled, in all ages, and for which obloquy and hissing are borne now.

J. W. SCHOLL.



.. Note ..



“The Light-Bearer of Liberty” is what it claims to be,—a tribute to the *living*. While these sheets are in the printer’s hands, comes the sad news that the eloquent voice is silenced forever.

This poem was written in August, 1898. A copy was forwarded with a personal letter to Col. Ingersoll, the September following. On October eleventh, the author received an autograph letter in response, which is now one of his choicest treasures.



COPY OF LETTER FROM COL. ROBERT G. INGERSOLL TO J. W. SCHOLL.

WALSTON, DOBBS’ FERRY-ON-HUDSON,
Oct. 8, 1898.

MY DEAR MR. SCHOLL,

I have read with the greatest delight your beautiful poem,—a poem that covers the whole ground, that has in it the very heart of history.

I do not deserve a hundredth part of your generous praise, and yet with all my heart I thank you for thinking that I do. I have done but little, and yet my pride is that that little has been done for the liberty of men. To have gained such a friend as you are, is to succeed.

Are you going to have the poem published? It is a great plea, a grand argument for freedom. Leaving all out regarding myself, the verses are wonderful, dramatic, filled with the real flame.

Thanking you and congratulating you and with love to you and yours,

I remain yours always,

(Signed,) R. G. INGERSOLL.

The Light-Bearer of Liberty.



A TITAN with a torch in hand
Is moving in the midst of men,
And some are cursing the sharp glare
Because their blind eyes cannot bear
The splendor of its clear white light
Athwart the dusks of ancient Night,

And some — a censer-swinging band —
Housed in their sacred robber's-den
Loud rattle old Saint Peter's keys,
Turn bellowing bulls loose from their sees
To fright the timid from the rays
That pierce their dark and hidden ways,

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

And some, who dare not understand
The breadth and height of human ken,
Clasp to their eyes a holy book
And, thus defended, calmly look
Upon the flaming torch, and swear
There is no torch nor lightnings there.



II.

THE Titan has a voice as clear
As the light he bears in his strong
right hand,
An urgent voice that men must hear
Or die unwept in a stagnant land.

A voice of laughter for hours of mirth,
A voice of tears for the time of grief,
A voice of joy for the flowers of earth,
A voice for every golden sheaf,

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

A voice for every honest doubt,
A voice for every manly trust,
A voice of cheer when the soul is stout,
A voice of praise when the deed is just.

A voice of scorn for the outgrown creed,
A voice of scathe for the hypocrite,
A voice of help for human need,
When souls in rayless dungeons sit.

A voice for sculpture and painting and song
A voice for the freedom of human
thought,
A voice for the conquest over wrong,
A voice for the soul that was never
bought.

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

A voice to parry the tyrant's blow,
A voice to lift the victim up,
A voice to smite the priesthood low,
And dash from their hands the poisoned
cup.

A voice to set the bondmen free
From chains of body and fetters of soul.
A voice of battle and victory,
A voice of striving to reach the goal.

A voice of faith in the far event
And the deathlessness of noble deeds,
And hope whose iris-bow is bent
O'er the path that ever onward leads.



III.

THE earth hears the Voice,
And stands aghast !

O Earth, rejoice !

The Iconoclast

Is clearing the ground

For a Pantheon !

List ! Hear the sound !

How the work goes on !

There lies a god

Broken in twain,

Here a Holy Rood

With its god's-blood stain.

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

There a book with a seal,
And a signet ring,
Here the print of a heel
On some holy thing.

There a boot and a screw,
And a strong-box rent,
Here indulgences new
To the four winds sent.

There beads are strewn,
And a book of prayer,
Here an image unknown,
And a surplice rare.

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

There the bones of a saint
 Tossed out in the mire,
Here a rag with the taint
 Of martyrdom's fire.

There an iron bed
 Is crushed at a blow,
Here a bishop's head
 And a king's below.

There the nails of a cross,
 And a shirt of Treves.
O Earth ! what a loss !
 For the Titan leaves

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

But the barren ground
For a Pantheon !
List ! Hear the sound !
How the work goes on !





IV.

RISE, true men,
Build it again,
Build it anew !
Out of the dust
Build it more just,
Build it more true !

Build it to last,
Build it more vast,
Grand as the soul !
Build without flaw,
Base it on law,
Perfect and whole !

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.



V.

WHAT does the Voice cry ?
There is no hell.

There is no god of blight and blood,
Of pestilence and fire and flood.

No Adam fell.

No child is damned.

No chosen sect.

No heaven crammed
With God's elect.

No miracle !

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

No One in Three,
No Three in One,
No world undone !
Of mystery
No priest or prophet !
No purchase-blood
To save from Tophet !
No tithes of food
God's leeches to fee !
This is the Titan's cry.





VI.

THE Voice cries out again :
Strike the bonds from the limbs of men !
Strike the chains from the minds of men !
Strike the hate from the hearts of men !
Strike the lusts from the flesh of men !
Strike the lie from the lips of men !
Strike the creeds from the souls of men !
Let in the Light and the Love again !





VII.

BEST Goddess of a noble throng,
O Liberty, desired so long,
Thy latest Torch-bearer we hail !
Long be it ere his strength shall fail !
Long may the Titan's stalwart hand
Hurl thy swift lightnings through the land !
Long may the Titan's potent word
In thine all-conquering cause be heard !
And when his lingering hour shall come,
Lift thou the Light ! O be not dumb !
Sustain and cheer, uphold us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget !





VIII.

AND must we wait till a great man dies,
And honor him with a pile of stone
And a statue carved with a brave "here lies,"
To keep his fame and virtues known?

Such posthumous praise is too long deferred,
When the dead fare well, where the living
fared worse!

The man who speaks an immortal word
Better beseems an immortal verse

Flung out to the winds of the listening Earth,
Or a living wreath for his living head.
Take then this wreath! It is little worth,
But I would not wait till thou art dead.



IX.

BE still, proud bells !
Hush your dissonant clamors !
Stay your pendent hammers !
Be still, proud bells !

This fete is not for you
High up in your gothic towers,
A gala day for the few
Who defy tyrannic powers.

A sacrament day to me,
With wine and wafers of love,
For the Master abides with me
And throbs through me with his love.

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

And the world has a hope today,
And the burden is lifted quite,
And the future stretches away
O'erarched with a bow of light.

Be still, proud bells !
If we mourned him dead,
You would laugh over head !
Be still, proud bells !





X.

RING out, glad bells !
Swing your pendent hammers !
Loose your dissonant clamors !
Ring out, glad bells !

The joy of this day is for *all*,
For you in your gothic towers,
Ring out sweet Liberty's call,
And startle the tyrant powers !

Leap up to the regions of light,
Give it tongue and never cease,
Leap out of your ghostly night,
And utter his message of peace !

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

For the best you know today,
 You owe to the stalwart hand
That threw your idols away
 And tore faith's blinding band !

Ring out, glad bells !
 If you *knew* him, when dead,
 You would sob overhead !
Ring out, sad bells !





XI.

YE Kings of the Earth,
The Smiter's hand is at your thrones,
An eagle-pinioned Age disowns
Your right of birth !

Your first born prince
May be but a worthless driveling fool,
A hare-brained rake, or an easy tool
Of intrigue or chance.

And the heavens, methinks,
Are tired of the red incessant flood,
For strewn with gore and sodden with
blood
The whole earth stinks.

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

Because, forsooth,
Two knaves of royal birth would reign,
One knave and half his realm is slain
With no more ruth

Than a spider feels,
When caught in his web with tangled
wings
A swarm of blue-mailed insects clings
In the knitted wheels,

For common blood
Is only fit to manure the ground,
Or tempt the vultures to wheel around
Their wonted food !

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

Quail ! Kings of the Earth !

For the Smiter's hand is at your thrones
And the eagle-pinioned Age disowns
Your right of birth !

Hark ! Hear the cry !

Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood !
Risen from one baptism of blood
Where thousands lie,

They offer peace—

An olive branch with a stain of blood—
O take it, and spare the rich red flood
That shall not cease

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

Till Earth is free,
And every kingdom is overthrown,
And crowns and scepters are bawbles
grown
For Democracy !

It comes ! It comes !
Let it be peace or let it be war !
Choose, ye Nations ! I hear it afar
With trumpets and drums !

Ye Freeman, choose !
Surge, surge and emerge from royalty's
ban,
Try the loss of a king and the gain of
man !
Ye cannot lose !

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

Fall ! Kings of the Earth !
The Smiter's hand is at your thrones,
And the eagle-pinioned Age disowns
Your right of birth.



XII.

THE Deums sing,
Most noble King
Of rich Brazil !
You left the throne,
Now reigns alone
The People's will !

Long sit serene
Brittania's Queen,
Hoar figure-head !
The day has dawned !
Your crown is pawned,
Your office dead !

But Dies irae—
Ordeals fiery—
For all the others,
Till the will of one
Is a law to none
And men are brothers !



XIII.

COME, O Woman, noble Queen,
Crowning Masterpiece of Time,
Evolution's work sublime,
Choicest creature ever seen !

Crown your great Deliverer !
Bring the conqueror's meed of oak !
He your galling bondage broke,
His the mightiest thunders were.

You were slaves of slaves at first—
Old Saint Paul had made you so—
Abject, suffering, full of woe—
Saints despised you, Jahveh cursed—

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

Silent, serving tyrant man,
Doll or mistress, chattel, ward,
Man your lord as Christ his lord,
Blot on fair creation's plan !

Necessary evils, you !
How could man be born, in truth ?
Man, creation's lord, forsooth !
Any ape, meseems, would do !

So your wings were early clipped,
Bearing children half your sphere,
Other half a husband's fear,
Love-buds frosty curses nipped.

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

Priests were slaves to self-made ghosts,
Men were slaves to wily priests,
Women slaves to both the beasts,
So it pleased the Lord of Hosts !

So it stands in holy writ, —
Holy bugbear for the race ; —
Woman meekly took her place,
And the ages hallowed it.

Rise, O Woman, noble Queen,
Crowning Masterpiece of Time,
Evolution's work sublime,
Choicest creature ever seen !

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

Voices came from out the deeps,
Thoughts that battled hard and long,
Manacled by priestly wrong ;
Freedom burst her donjon-keeps ;

Skulls grew larger, senses finer,
Justice snatched the balances,
Love climbed up through swift degrees,
Human life became diviner ;

Ghosts and priests have slowly sunk,
Men and women slowly climb,
Woman yet shall rise sublime,
Ghosts be lower than a monk !

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

She shall own her intellect,
Own her head and heart and hand,
Every door shall open stand
Wheresoe'er her brain elect !

She shall own her flesh and blood.
Marriage vows shall make no slaves.
Legal vice shall dig no graves
For polluted motherhood !

And the Man shall honors do,
Girdle her with service sweet,
Find his heaven at her feet,
Noble, generous, manly, true !

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

Come, O Woman, noble Queen,
Crowning Masterpiece of Time,
Evolution's work sublime,
Choicest creature ever seen !

Crown your strong Deliverer !
Bring the civic wreath of oak !
Hail, O Lifter of the yoke !
Hail, O mighty Thunderer !





XIV.

DIMPLED babies, pink and white,—
Heaven's own embodied light,—
Lent for balm to mortal sight !

Who would dare to look within
Souls like yours, to heaven akin,
Swearing they are stuffed with sin ?

Lips that touched a mother's breast,
Hands that mothers' hands have pressed,
Cheeks that mothers' cheeks caressed,

Need no priestly rites baptismal,
Need no shelter from the abysmal
Gulf of Hades dark and dismal.

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

Were you, priests, but half so pure,
Though the earth should not endure,
You might hope to sit secure !

Gooing babies, helpless pygmies,
Who shall solve your Fate's enigmas ?
Who shall save you from Earth's stigmas ?

Who shall keep your bodies sweet ?
Who shall guide uncertain feet ?
Who shall choose when pathways meet ?

Who shall wield the potent charm
Timely wise to sound the alarm
To forefend approaching harm ?

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

Who unveil to questioning eyes
All the shadowy world that lies
Back of life's realities ?

Who shall lift Deception's masks ?
Fathers, mothers, these your tasks !
Higher, nobler, no one asks !

Unconsulted little wights,
Subject to ten thousand slights,
You have most undoubted rights,

Right to birth by choice, not chance,
Full fruition, slow advance,
Taintless flesh, intelligence,

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

Perfect function, faultless form,
Appetite and senses warm,
Sex and love for passion's storm.

Who would bring you into light
Out of Being's primal night
And make void one single right,

Should be cursed with childlessness,
Never know Love's sweet embrace,
Never feel a child's caress !

Irresponsible for being,
Not dissenting nor agreeing,
Neither seeking life nor fleeing,

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

Fated as the scattered wheat
Basking in autumnal heat
Underneath the sower's feet,

Flowers of sweet humanity,
Shall the promised harvest be
Absolutest property ?

Shall the father own the soul ?
Play the slaver's hated role ?
Body, brain and life control ?

Muse of Liberty, protest !
Do sweet childhood's one behest
Till its wrongs are all redressed !

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

Dimpled babies, pink and white,—
Heaven's own embodied light,—
Lent for balm to mortal sight !

Hopes that shine like radiant stars,
Loves indriftng across the bars,—
Soul's incessant avatars !

Leaders of each new crusade
'Gainst the realms of darkness made,
We will send you willing aid !

We, the elders, see the light,
Breaking at the close of night,
You are standing in the white

Radiance of a fairer dawn !
Shout "God speed !" and cheer them on,
Till the night is wholly gone !



XV.

A CRY of Humanity :

O voice of a thousand streams unpent,
Down leaping from rock to rock dashing to
spray !

O roar of tempest and wrestle of mighty
whirlwind,

Unrestrained and mad, yet not lawless !

O types of true men, mighty, unfettered !

Cry and utter adown the blast :

Io pæan ! An endless shout,

Blast of trumpets and lusty throats !

Hosanna ! and Gloria in excelsis !

Honor and laud for the mighty rescue !

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

The new blood surges in fetterless limbs,
The new blood surges in quivering brains,
And thoughts flash out like sparks from an
anvil !

The whole world is kindling.

A new æon is born, and the new Phoenix
arises

From cold ashes of slavish death
And sweeps on majestic wing toward the
flaming East !

Gather, O mighty men, and behold !

O magnificent mothers, and gaze on it !

And your children shall shine and burn with
the flame of it,

And the great Law shall be written no more
in books,

Nor be graven on stone,

But the brain and heart shall be law enough,

And even young blood shall be law enough !

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

Not by fear shall the Right bear rule,
But by love, and he that loves best
Shall be the Exemplar and bear the scepter,
Yet he shall not bear rule !
Each man shall be king of himself !
Each woman queen of herself !
Each child the lord of itself, reverend,
Reverenced above the Kings and Queens of
the Earth,
For the child-soul is the budding of a mil-
lion generations,
And grander by implication of a million new
generations,
The harvest and seeding at once of the
infinite Past and the Future !
Shout aloud ! Let joy be unbounded as
life is unbounded !
The new Order be a monument to him
And to every Titan that broke a bond
Or struck a blow for the rescue !

XVI.

SPIRITS, goblins, gods and ghosts,
Marshall your aerial hosts,
Spread your gauze or leathern wings
And descend in narrowing rings !

Squeak or gibber, shriek or thunder,
Cleave the cloudless sky asunder,
Show your forms to mortal sight,
Wheel around us and alight !

Silence ! What ? Ye will not come ?
Earth is speechless ! Heaven dumb !
Gods and ghosts and goblins gone,
Frightened from the glowing dawn !





XVII.

WHAT is the end and meaning of a life ?
Is it to feel the tides of spirit surge
Through every fiber of the heart and brain
And seal the lips forever ? To know a truth
And choke and smother it within the soul,
Lest the quick eye and tell-tale earnest face
Should half reveal it to a struggling brother ?
O agony of silence ! Must it be
That, standing in the surging throngs of men
Whose dullard senses feel nor see nor hear
The world that lies within them and above,

My tongue is silent? Must I feel and see
The shame and degradation of a world
And hear the clanking chains that shackle
thought,
And yet not speak? Nay, I *will* speak, *must*
speak,
Though I should stand alone and scorned of
men,
For, in full consecration to my task,
I'd rather be called infidel by man
Than live unfaithful to my highest thought !



XVIII.

TITANIC Herald of the whitening dawn,
Maligned and hated, cursed, misunderstood,
Yet dreaded by the Night's misgotten
brood,—
Tithe-mongering hypocrites that lick and
fawn
The hand of power, but rudely trample on
The helpless weakling and despoil his
good,
And shoddy saints with villainy indued
In purple robes, and Superstition's spawn
That fill the cushioned pews and take their
ease
While reverend Dulness drones the liturgies,
Or bustling Mediocrity displays
The curious gleanings of his college days!—
The heathen rage, but thou art still serene,
Olympian, gazing on the troubled scene.

THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY.

But here and there a soul is kindled new
 With fire *asbestous*, and all human creeds
 And schemes born of imperious human
 needs
Are tested in the crucible anew,
The false burnt out, and radiant left the true.
 His constant fire the cunning chemist
 feeds
 And fans to flame the smouldering fur-
 nace gleeds,
Till all is tested or Life's day is through !
These build Earth's consecrated Brother-
 hood,
Sworn foes of evil, friends of every good.
Thou, Titan, art the clear white light of it.
Long years among us deign, revered, to sit,
And we will wreathe an amaranthine crown
To match the deathlessness of thy renown !

The Spectral Visitant.



I looked up from the mighty book.
My hands with toil-worn palsy shook,
And sight my sleepless orbs forsook,

Or seemed a moment to forsake,
Then out of darkness seemed to make
A specter that all hues would take,—

A form inconstant as a dream's,
Shot through and through with living
beams,—

A tissue strange of dusks and gleams.

And then with preternatural sight
I saw—O vision of affright !—
Myself, that hollow ghost of Night !

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

And in its haggard lineaments read
The marble lips of one long dead
That moved as if they something said.

I heard within my midnight room
A sigh as when a sense of doom
Strikes through grim Death's abysmal gloom,

And two cold eyes abashed my own.
I shivered and I felt alone
With hope and courage well-nigh gone,

Whereat the lips of spectral mould
Made bold to taunt me ; "Thou art old !
Thy blood with sleepless toil grows cold !

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

Consider well thy little span —
How swift thy youthful decades ran —
How swifter flies the age of man !

There is no harvest in the years,
But ever seed-time full of tears
Beguiled by hope that harvest nears ! ”

He saw my eyes with misery fill,
Whereat he smote with bolder skill,
With purpose to dethrone my will ;

“ O earthy Earth, that wert not meant
To conquer the environment
That Mother Nature kindly lent,

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

'Tis but a fever of the blood
That tells thee of unconquered good
Beyond thy fated humanhood !

Were it not best to sit content
Within thy humble element,
Nor strive for dubious betterment ?”

Whereat I rallied and replied ;
“Who said that Hope had ever lied ?
For Time is long, the World is wide !”

A cold smile beamed across his face ;
“Art thou coæval with the race ?
Or fillest but some sorry space

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

Of three score years and ten, or less,
With long-complaining weariness,
Scarce heard amid Earth's storm and stress ?

Is Earth a furlong wide to thee
Who never traversed land or sea,
Save in this musty library ?”

I dared not answer what I meant,
Lest Hope's best shafts as idly spent
Leave me devoid of armament.

Taking my silence for defeat,
He bent his questioning orbs to meet
The great book fallen at my feet.

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

I said : "The Masters lived and wrought,
They moulded worlds to fit their thought,
By them the great Soul must be taught."

"And if he try his hand untaught,
What frightful wrongs are oft inwrought
In every deed," he said ; "and thought !

And if he wait till all is learned,
And Life's dim lamp is wholly burned,
What is the fruit his toil has earned ?

Hast thou the genial medium found
Where thoughts and deeds alike abound,
Where thoughts and deeds alike are sound ?

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

Confess, poor Toiler on the shore
Of ancient wreckage, that thy lore
Is less than theirs who went before !

And yet beyond a vague perchance,
Thou wilt the Scholar's toil enhance,
Thy books impeding all advance !"

Before my startled eyes he stept,
To where my garnered treasures slepped,
And clutched my precious manuscript,

And, with a mocking glance, elate,
Tossed it into the blazing grate,
My heart's blood froze,—grown cold of late,—

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

To see the pages smoke and curl,
And flamelets dance and leap and whirl,
I thought of each Rialto pearl

There garnered, worth a kingdom's price,
Destroyed like kingdoms in a trice,
When coldly questioned that hard voice ;

“Will any frugal meal taste worse,
Or any dawn grow dark with curse
For wanting of thy lost discourse ?

And see, thou hast a sprightlier fire
To flicker like thy heart's desire
A moment, and with it expire !”

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

I could not speak but only weep
To watch the flame-tongues slowly creep,
When from its dead lethargic sleep

My soul awoke and whispered near :
“O heavy Heart, be of good cheer,
Thy pearls and gold are garnered here !

Thou art the sum of three score years,
The ripened fruit of toil and tears,
Thyself the harvest of whitened ears !”

Whereat I felt a kindly hope
Dawn swiftly up the Eastern slope
And gleam beyond the heavens' cope.

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

Which swift divining from my face,
Wherein no tear had left its trace
The Soul's clear morning to deface ;

“ No seed of all that harvest sown,
It profits little to have grown,”
He said : “ when thou and thine art gone.

What comfort is it now to thee
The sum of three score years to be,
Yet not of Time's infinity ?

Thou hast but garnered a few seeds,
Immixed with chaff and noxious weeds,
Fit only for the furnace gleeds,

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

Which each has garnered in his turn,
And others many yet shall learn
To boast, ere they to dust return.

But in the cycle of the years,
Is there a gain to match their tears,
Or circle all in like careers ?

What boots it to be learned, and die ?
The unlettered laughs as merrily,
And both at length shall equal lie.

What boots it to be rich and great ?
The plowman on thy broad estate,
Gets sunshine at as cheap a rate.

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

Wilt thou grow overbold by hopes
That seem to dawn on golden slopes ?
Thy face betrays how thy heart gropes,

And new springs of unbidden tears
But show how desert are thy years,
Thou puny last of many peers !

Surely 'twere best to sit content
Within thy humble element
Nor strive for dubious betterment !”

At length, my sorrows partly spent,
A little cry of hope found vent
That to my spirit courage lent ;

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

“Each age grows better than the last,
The Present richer than the Past,
By Futures still to be surpassed !”

“How wilt thou prove it ?” spake the ghost;
“The Past is gone, and wholly lost,
And all thou knowest is, at most,

What men have dreamed the Past should be
And built with various phantasy
Out of the wrecks of History !

The Future is an unseen bourn
That fond hearts call the Land of Morn
Where all millenniums are born.

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

Each Age is different, 'tis true,
By growing into something new,
Whereof the earlier dreamed nor knew,

But every gain has recompense
By equal loss of parts or sense
Grown useless in Time's consequence ;

And even progress is but change
To undreamed somethings wild or strange,
But never unto wider range !

But thou, list to the endless wail
Of Sorrow, brooding o'er each vale !
See Care sit silent, deadly pale,

Half-dreaming of Saturnian reigns,
And Edens lost, that none regains !
What say to thee these endless threnes ?

Do they not mock thy golden dreams
And clip the Future of his beams ?”
The firelight fell, and dimmed its gleams.

The shriveled parchment in the grate
Lay black and dead, and I, of late
So strong, felt all my strength abate,

As if the fires of Life had burned,
Till all my soul to cinders turned.
But inward heat all undiscerned

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

Leaped forth to flame. "Grim ghost !" I said :
"Though beaten back, I am not dead,
Against thee shall my soul make head !

For man at least sometimes is meant
To overleap environment
And send a thrill of glad content

Through all the old world's dullard nerves !
The great Soul comes, the old world swerves
And leaps in new and undreamed curves !

Is it not worth some strife to be
A Soul of such compelling, free,
Exerting world-wide potency ?"

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

“If true, small comfort, seems to me !
Oh! Ay!” he said so mockingly ;
“Thou art that Soul of potency?

Once in a century is born
A great Soul flashing like the morn
From out the Void’s unmeasured bourn,

But myriads, while that age flits by,
Leap into life with one faint cry,
Creep out of life with one faint sigh,

And round life’s dull monotony
With so much toil and penury,
And so much care and misery.

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

What boots it if great souls are sent
Across a fair world's firmament,
If thou art wretched, discontent,

Among the myriads that were meant
To yield to stern environment
That Mother Earth so kindly lent?

Besides, no Soul heroic drew
From husks of books the living dew,
But shared fair Nature as she grew!"

" Though hard, O Spectral Visitant,
Thy words, and of soft soothing scant,
Thou hast thyself the weapon lent

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

Wherewith I conquer," thus I said ;
"I close these books that seem so dead,
I choose the Living Book instead !"

To which replied the mocking Voice ;
"I wish thee joy of thy new choice !
How must thy shriveled soul rejoice,

To count the petals of the rose,
To note the wind that, veering, blows,
To mark the dawn that roseate glows,

To dig huge fossils, dip the seas,
Out-quarry mountains, fell great trees,
Or watch in curious towers, at ease,

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

The planets in their orbits swing,
Or, lighting on some nearer thing,
Note how the hived bees lose their sting,

Or how the busy ants entwine
Their deft antennæ long and fine,
And talk like humans infantine.

The task were scarce a thousandth done
When one poor mortal life is run!
Thou hadst, perchance, some respite won

From moldering care and misery,
But all thy learning dies with thee!
What profits that to thee or me?"

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

He said. I answered cheerily;
“Is respite won from misery
So little worth to thee and me?”

“And death is respite equally !
Does this make hemlock taste to thee
Like nectar ?” answered sneeringly

The Voice. And all my members shook
With palsy, at his darkened look,
And warmth my pallid cheeks forsook.

He raised aloft in his right hand,
As light as fairy lifts her wand,
A gleaming two-edged battle-brand,

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

And Azrael grew his form apace.
I shrunk, and fell upon my face,
And prayed him for a little space ;

Whereat he laughed : "A little life,
Though old and sere and full of strife,
Is sweeter than this spectral knife

That would bring respite? Man, arise,
Confess that striving toward the skies,
Is cause of all thy miseries! "

A voice within refused assent,
I would not rot in ease, content
To take what gifts the earth-gods sent,

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

But, humbled, I arose and stood,
And questioned every human good,
To find the crown of humanhood.

Long balancing with bated breath,
The nice accounts of Life and Death,
I held with him who nobly saith,

That Life is ever lord of Death.
I chose wild pulse-beats, panting breath,
And stirrings of the inward wraith

That makes a tumult in the veins,
And feels the worth of joys and pains,
And lords it over dust, and reigns,

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

Albeit for a sorry space!
At length, I lifted up my face,
As one who overlives disgrace,

And said : " Death's respite is decay,
But Life's rest is the subtle play
Of nerves that feel the touch of May."

" The dead feel naught. The living feel.
I lately saw thee, stricken, kneel,
And cold white lids with thy lips seal,

And thine own lids deep purple grew,
And grief rained through them bitter dew,
Who suffered most, the dead or you ? "

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

He smote me with a grief so near,
So dear, I could not choose but hear:
I saw again her pall and bier —

The funeral pomp of coach and hearse :—
I saw the black train slow disperse,
And I was left alone, to nurse

The wound of Azrael's fatal knife,
For she that was the life of life —
My lily bride, now sainted wife,—

Had withered. Ere I spake, he said :
“I saw thee clinging to the dead,
I saw thee pillow her cold head

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

Upon thy breast, I saw thee lay
Thy hand upon her hands, and pray
That Death might snatch ye both away,

Nor leave one back to pine and weep,
And love's sad vigils vainly keep !
Hast thou forgotten that sweet sleep ? ”

I answered slow with stifled breath :
“ I prayed, but not alone for death,
I prayed in anguish-wakened faith

That death is but the open door
That leads to life forevermore
With her upon some fairer shore.”

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

“A cheat,” he answered ; “who can tell?
Perchance it is for mortals well
That faith and hope have such a spell

To rob the grave of half its sting!
But why not at a single spring,
Make proof of an uncertain thing?

Here’s hemlock, here’s distilled blood
Of slumberous poppies, that have stood,
A gloomy Stygian sisterhood.

Drink, and make proof of the unseen!
Thou art a scientist, I ween,
And many a curious thing hast seen,

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

But *one* thou hast not, it is Death.
O'erleap the chasm! Prove thy faith,
If it be truly what it saith !

Clasp thy loved wife within thine arms !
Ha ! Faith is weak ! Immortal charms
Woo not thy soul from Earth's alarms !

Thou hast no mighty faith to hold
Thy sinking spirits from the cold
Dark dread of rotting into mold !

Cheat not thyself and me with words.
Faith's idle blandishment affords
No lasting comfort, nor accords

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

The grave one luring attribute !
Speak not of life beyond ! Be mute
Till man is somewhat more than brute !

If life have some excuse to be,
'Tis here thou findest it, for see,
Thy last gasp is the end of thee !”

Not wholly robbed of faith, I cried :
“ I cannot know what may betide,
When life drifts to the other side ;

I only know that Love dreams on,
And clasps the spirit that is gone.
I cannot doubt the morrow's dawn,

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

Though life's dark night had not a star;
But waiving faith that dreams afar
Beyond Earth's latest sunset bar,

I'll meet thee in thy chosen list,
And crush thee, gloomy agonist,
Though that best armor I have missed:

If Death were lord of Life instead,
This Earth were wholly dark and dead,
A huge, wild, granite earthquake-bed,

Storm-beaten, ocean-lashed, and bare,
With arid zones of parching air,
And ice-fields in the moon's cold glare,

With ne'er a leaf, and ne'er a wing,
To mark the dawning of the spring,
And fill green woods with twittering ! ”

“Ay ! Life *is* destined, if you will,
But may be either good or ill,”
He urged. I answered warmer still,

The hot blood beating in my breast :
“Of good or ill, what is the test?
Is pleasure evermore the best?

To be at-one with the world's life,
A-striving with the general strife,
Though every hour with pain were rife,

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

Is best ! I dare not break the vase
God fashioned with such subtle grace,
Till he remove it from its place.

My answer, Ghost, is not complete
With logic, but each strong pulse-beat
Of dawning life makes thee retreat,

And though my lips were wholly dumb,
Though nerves and brain were cold and numb,
An answer from the heart would come ! ”

“ Live on and suffer ! I have done.
The heart by logic ne’er was won,
Hug life as when it first begun.

But cease from striving, learn to drift
As life's low surges sink and lift,
As time's light breezes change and shift !”

He said. “Not thus I bid adieu !
The Heart's still voice is not less true
Than logic's *ergo*. Hear me through !

Instinct is more than knowledge still,
And feeling is the birth of will:
I'll reck its rede through good or ill.

It whispers 'till my pulses dance ;
Life is not dullard sufferance,
But daily struggling to advance.

THE SPECTRAL VISITANT.

Life and more life it seems to me
The whole world sings. The symphony
Dispels my self-wrought misery.

Strife and more strife, it seems to sing,
For life is striving, Everything,
By striving, bursts to leaf and wing !”

Athwart my windows beat the dawn.
I saw her foot-prints on the lawn,—
My Spectral Visitant was gone !



Jesus of Nazareth.



THOU Warder of forgotten histories,
Oblivion, bring forth thy hidden scrolls,
Restore to Memory thy treasured lore,
The record of his birth and life and death,
Else shall we miss the golden grains of truth
While winnowing the chaff of fables vain.

Ye crude Evangels, told from lip to lip,
Repeated oft by ignorant peasantry
Who lifted marvel into miracle
Till crystallizèd into Grecian rolls
Obscure,—a century's gathered wreck and
drift,—
Though full of error, yet with nascent faith
Illumed, creep from monastic dust and death,
Proclaim your faithlessness, and undeceive
The myriads that rest their faith in myth
Rather than trust the great strong soul of man!

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

Ye hills by pilgrims of the mighty West
Long sought, restore the impress of his feet
That we may thread his mazed ministries,
Nor heed the tales of credulous fabulists
Or fond traditions of evangelists !
Call from sepulchral dust the multitudes
That followed the great Thaumaturge's steps,
Content to eat his bread and drink his wine
For the small pain of hearkening his words !
Call forth the lazar throngs, the halt, the blind,
The congregate deformities of Earth,—
Whose misereres sought him in the fields
And by the gates, and thronged porticoes
Of synagogues and temples,—careless all
For piety, if but their ills were cured !
Restore his world, that flagging human faith
Be tasked no farther with those marvels old
Than with the spirit of our own vast age
Where sense and reason — wonted guides —
are hers !

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

Might we but share his serving, we would list
His words and wonders with the toil-worn

Twelve,

Now tarrying at Cana's nuptial feast,
And now by Sychar's ancient well athirst
Where he for one cool draught of that deep
font

Gave her that drew it, — though of hated
race,—

The priceless draught of living water, Hope ;
Now wandering by fair Genessarett,—
His refuge from the Doctors' murderous
hate

When thrust with menace from the syna-
gogue,—

Or plucking ears from the white harvest
fields

Amid the taunts of Sabbatarian priests
Whose pharisaic pride loved much to boast
Of righteous zeal for the Mosaic texts ;

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

Now entering the temple — newly purged
Of sacrificial markets — where he taught
Unwelcome truth, — by men called heresy
When winged first from some high search-
ing mind,—

Defying openly the hierarchs,
But winning empire with the weak oppressed :
Now seeking peace in far Zidonia
From priestly machinations born of hate,
Then turning back to his unfinished task
That grew to tragedy with each swift day,
From olive-branchèd triumph and acclaim,
Through dark Gethsemane and broken faith,
To the great consummation, guiltless death!

And thus sojourning long, O Paraklete,
O spirit of mighty Manhood, thou Unknown,
From whom our loftiest aims and hopes are
drawn,
To whom we stretch our thought-creating
souls,

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

When yearning for ideal Grace and Truth,
We fain would beg of thee—nor beg in vain—
A mind to apprehend his manly mind,
A soul to apprehend his passionate soul,
To know and feel what he must know
and feel

Amid the halt and blind and ignorant
And blinder guilds of death and cults of sin!

Oh for one impulse of divinest love
To deify one instant of this life
And lift our dullard souls to newer heights!
Or, if thy gifts, denied to meaner souls,
Are only won by asking lavishly,
Grant us ecstatic days of deity
And whole triumphant years of perfectness!

Three years of such a life, though scorned
of men
And shut within the bounds of one weak state,
Today could pierce the bubble of the creeds,
And drive the daily lie from pious lips,

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

And strike the chains from man's all-con-
quering mind

Till life and love and truth were all in all,
And forward through the ages urge the tide
Of larger manhood till the frailest child
Of toil and sorrow should excel the gods
That our poor thoughts have fashioned and
enshrined.

Then marvel not that Judah's carpenter
So builded in the souls of lesser men
That twice ten centuries called him very God.

Yet was he man, and son of man, nor
dared

In all his royal vision overstep
His heritage of mortal flesh or claim
One item of pure deity. He felt
As man must feel, in life's strait circum-
stance

Of daily need and toil and toil's reward
With pain secured. He knew temptation's lure

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

Disguised as gilded good, and virtue's bane
To be misunderstood, and bitter grief,
And over all compassion and strong faith.
No God with heaven-descended vital thought
Could reach the human soul through sym-
thies

As he, the Man among co-equal men,
Living their life and teaching them to live
With daily reverence for the highest Good
And daily struggles for the Perfectness.

And if at times in mystic mood he chose
The loftier title, Son of God, he claimed
But loftier right, for he was son of God
By right of manhood's dignity and height,
Not deity by unigeniture
Of Infinite God, with whom can be no need
Of geniture—Mortality's fair gift
For conquering death, in bearing newer forms
In endless swift succession, and, in joy,
Snatching immortal life from out the dust ;—

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

Nor with ambitious majesty and pride
He chose exalted names, but that all men
Through living blameless in the strength of
truth

And virtue, faithful through extremest woe,
Might share his heritage and dignities,
All sons of God, all equal, and none Lord.

He was a mystic and enthusiast
Whose words, if misinterpreted, could make
A bigot's iron creed and stifle thought
By chaining reason, or could nourish fat
The dreaded monsters of fanatic zeal
And self-complacent jesulatria;
Whose life, if emulated, would reread
His words in generous faith and comprehend
The vital truth within the letter's death.

He was unlettered in an age unlearned.
He never weighed the sun with curious zeal,
Nor traced the planets in their mighty orbs
Disclosing secrets with the prism and lens,

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

Nor read the message of the buried rocks
In relics of archaic life exhumed,
Nor sought the gelid seas for either pole
Or routes to India or far Cathay,
Nor pierced the tropic jungles hot and dank,
For unknown forms of insect, bird and beast;
Nor climbed the mountains to their snowy
 crests
To pluck rare plants from out their frozen
 home,
Nor, housed within commodious academes,
Traced geometric angles, points and curves,
Or played with numbers or with foreign
 tongues,
Careless to tread through all the curious maze
That men must pass to knowledge. He but
 sought
Essential knowledge which is knowing Self,
Nor needed letters for the Father's task ;
For whoso, sentient-souled, by inward search,

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

Attends its passions and perpetual dreams,
In solitude and in society,
In lowliest circumstance of poverty
O'er-roofed with rudest thatch or roofless all,
In highest station and luxurious ease
Immured in palaces on stable thrones,
Hath largest wisdom though unlettered still,
And ofttimes largest knowledge deigns to
dwell

With open minds that read, not scrolls, but
men.

Well might he say that greatest truths are hid
From bookish saintliness but shown to babes.

And, knowing Self, he knew the dignity
Of Soul, and loved it wheresoe'er it dwelt,
With more of honor where it sat enthroned
And swayed a regal scepter o'er the man,
With more of pity where it pined for life
Amid the ruins of its fallen fanes,—
Imbruted man, — man's worst antithesis.

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

He loved, nor can the fabled burning heart
Tell how he loved. No household loves
were his
To weave Arachne's webs about his feet
And take him in the snare of prattling
tongues
And childish sweet embracings. No caress
Dearer than Mary's earliest kiss he knew,
Forsaking lesser for the larger love,
Not as in scorn of woman's loveliness,
Not in ascetic fear to touch her lips
As if with serpent's venom overspread,
But, consecrated to a martyr's task
Three summers long, ease and soft nuptial joys
Though pure as Heaven or the thoughts of
God,
Less charmed him than the road to Golgotha.
But woman's priceless love was not withheld.
Behold her sitting at his feet, devout,
Or low, anointing them with spikenard rare.

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

He loved, and Love allied with Truth is
power.

And thus he spake the mightiest burning
words —

Words winged like seraphs with beatitudes,
But each beatitude the recompense
Of highest living — Life's supremest good.
From that thalassian mountain-side obscure,
Where the astonished multitude sat down,
Hearken the echo of the sweetest words
That through the ages fell on human ear,
And, in their Benedictus, lose thyself
To find a selfhood incorrupt and high
Whose every throb may say to thy strong
soul ;

“Blessed, thrice blessed, art thou, son of
God !”

No human heart that beats has grown so
weak,

No human soul that feels is sunk so low,

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

But may with hope sublime and during faith
Prove worthy sonship with the living God.

"Love God, Love man!" This was his
message clear.

What more he taught is but particular.

For this he suffered. Can the Roman
cross

With all its imagery of agony

Tell how he suffered? His too sensitive heart

That wept for Salem in her desolate walls

As for a friend departed, that moaned out

Its anguish at the tomb of love, that sank

Crushed to Gethsemane's lone midnight earth

With passion heavier than death, betrayed

By one he trusted, O to wear the purple

And crown acanthus and be struck with hands

And mocked with taunting words and spit
upon !

What need of Roman arms to break such
hearts ?

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

Betrayal deadlier than Roman arms
Extinguished in foul marks of guilt and shame
The sweetest human life of all that age,
Its task half finished or yet unconceived.
And yet, to die and leave the unfinished
scheme

To men who fled from Roman spears and
staves,

Was easier than to yield convictions strong.
He chose to die, Truth's protomartyr grand,
Loved, hated, wept for, cursed, but ne'er
forgot.

He died, and loving hands pressed down
those lids

To hide the lusterless dead eyes that once
Beamed love divinely sweet ; strong, faithful
arms

Bore the deep wounded corse from the dread
cross,

And laid it gently in its sepulcher ;

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

And when the stone that sealed its narrow cell
Closed o'er his dust, Despair and Anguish
cried ;

“Never! Never! Never!” Even Hope,
the while,

Her song of immortality forgot,
And Faith forgot that God is over all.

A generation died, and with it died
The comrades of his toils and thoughts and
loves.

Alone survived the legends of his life,
Grown as the legend grows in human mouths
That glorify by myth and wondrous tale
Those whose broad minds, sweet souls and
simple loves

Uptower above the level of their age —
The Thaumaturges — the Misunderstood —
The Deified, because misunderstood !
What Hero was of human mould ? For lo !
A virgin sweet immaculate, whom God

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

Impregn'd, hath born a God. So runs the
tale.

He lives and dies a God. The sepulcher
Despite rock-ribbed eternal silences
Bursts open at his touch divine. Behold
"Surrexit" graven deep on every tomb
Of hero dust! The Empyrean courts,
By right divine, are his. And circling clouds—
A gorgeous chariot — bear him to his throne.

Pause, blind enthusiast! on mortal man,
On vital dust heap not mistaken praise!
Is truth incredible from human lips?
Is man so sunk that gods alone can live
Exalted lives and die heroic deaths?
Can apotheoses exalt the soul
That death between the thieves could never
shame?

Thank God devoutly this was but a man
And what once man hath done man yet can do!
Take noble courage from a simple life

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

Beset with hatred, yet grown rich in love.
Learn this high thought : so high as mind
can aim,

So high as soul her grand ideal marks,
Thus high can human deeds at length ascend,
Thus much can human hands and lips achieve.
O Zeal ! why wert thou in this old blind
world

Enkindled — brand of Hell — to devastate
The beautiful and lovely with the sweep
Of thy wild besom ? Zeal, the bigot's plea,
Occasion and excuse of many crimes !
Alas ! that zeal such fatal blunders made !
Else were the tale of Christian centuries
An epos of sublimest deeds and thoughts
And not the lurid history of fiends,
Who lurked behind the sacred cross, or,
gowned
And stoled, swung censers, or with tedious
pomp

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

Droned through their fixed sonorous rituals.

But ages fled. The young Ekklesia,
A timid band by Rome's hard hand oppressed,
Grew by oppression till she lorded Rome
And ruled. With what a sacrifice ! She lost
All that Mount Olivet and Calvary
Bequeathed of love and faith and tenderness
And manly courage to defend the truth.
She won imperialism and heathen rites
And heathen dogma and philosophy.
Jesus, the Brother and familiar Friend
The Helper meek, and sweet Didaskalos,
Was thrust idolatrously in a niche
And named a God. A million souls forgot
The mighty God unseen who rules the world
And played with riddles of triunity.
Seal, Clio, fast within thine awful scroll
This tale, lest men all unawares should learn
How grew this jesulatrian fetichism,
This spirit-dwarfing tyrannous creed-curse,

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

And, undeceived, in their hot wrath should
tear

Their fetters, and in freedom's new-found
strength

Iconoclastic, smite the idol down!

Great God, have mercy on this old blind
world !

And Thou, sweet Soul of Galilee, if Thou
In some serene blue sphere of heaven be-
holdest

The millions bending to thy imaged wounds,
And hearest the passionate prayers sent up
to Thee,

And the full-throated Allelujas flung
From wine-kissed lips to honor Thee as God,
How must Thy brow and cheeks in anger
burn

To hear the endless roll of blasphemy!
To know Thy ministry all, all in vain,
How must thy heart with indignation swell

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

And every pulse throb out its bitter wrath !

Nay, that were less than human. Thou
wouldst look

With tears of pity and compassion mild
From this, Thy daily crucifixion, up
To the Eternal God, and cry again
Pathetic sweet Thy latest prayer ; “ Father,
Forgive them, for they know not what they
do ! ”



My Creed.



MY creed? my creed, you ask.? And is a
creed

The living bread wherewith to stay the plague
Of hunger in a man? I have no creed,—
For havings must be less than havers are!—
I am my creed,— and when the last pulse-beat
Makes period to the struggle of my life,
Behold the best confession in the deed!
A sketch, a skeleton, but still the best,
For words are clanging empty earthen jars
That take in wine or poison as you will.
I am my creed,— naught less than my whole
self,—

My strivings, had they fair fruition borne,
My dreams for others' weal, had all come true,

MY CREED.

My hopes for after times, were all fulfilled,
My aspirations looking from the top
Of mounts unclimbed by living men, all these
My creed, and yet not half the creed I mean ?

Credo —— ! credo —— ! fill in the rest,

O Priest,

And damn or save by answered nay or yea,
And I'm your slave, and run at your behest,
A fair deserving ass, but not a man:
But let me fill the blanks with deeds, not
words,—

There never stood a kinglier man of men,
None larger-hearted in the battle's brunt !

My hands into the hoary sea I dip
To clutch a handful of its mystery.
In vain ! The brine slips back into the deep !
So words are only wet with mystery
And hold no part of the eternal Truth.

A form of words ? A fossil in the drift,
A shell commodious for a slender life,

Dead words dug up? And living words so
vain?

Go, leave me, Priest, a lie from heedless lips
Can damn as swiftly as the truth can save.
I know too little to affirm so much.

Close up the Book, and clasp its ponderous
lids!

'Tis all too dead! Go, lay it in a crypt!
Conceal it from the eyes of living men,
Lest its too human gods be proven false,
And its too little heavens be burst in twain,
And its too withered earth grow green
with hope,
And its too brutal man be found more kind,
And its too trivial law be all outgrown,
The oak heeds not the burr that once en-
cased

The germ of root and trunk and myriad leaf.
So I can not re-enter that cramped cell
That housed and fed the hopes of ages gone.

I bask in sunshine of a larger world
And wrestle with the storms of times unborn !

I am the touchstone of the living Truth,
And patriarch and prophet are to me
But phantoms and *elohim* of the dead.
No man stands vicar twixt the world and me,
Though scores of centuries have rolled between

And hung a nimbus round his rugged brow.

The Soul is little, but the greatest thing
That had its birth in cosmic throes. I stand
With open avenues of sense, insphered,
Encircled by the ranked infinities
Of Time and Space, of Matter, Force and
Law,

And ranked infinitesimals beneath
My ken as far as infinite transcends.
Conceivable to inconceivable
With swift ascent from the soul's radiant

Flies thought and finds no resting-place secure.
 Can Faith set pillars on the Absolute
 And rear aloft their mighty capitals
 Into the Relative? The Mystery
 O'er-topples them into the void abyss
 Unsearchable, and Faith lights nearer home
 On symbols, dreaming that her pillars stand.
 Is there a guide of stronger wing? I fly
 On equal wing with him who dares the most,
 And yield not in the illimitable Vast!

Bring me the Book, O Priest! Unclasp the
 lids,

And I will test it. Look you! here is gold,—
 A grain or two half hid in bulky dross,—
 A gem that sparkles in a waste of sand,—
 A flower blooming in a wide morass,—
 A crumb of bread lost in a stinking slime,—
 A little wine to scent the lingering dregs,—
 A human thing, not worse than other books,
 Nor better than the age that gave it birth.

MY CREED.

I take the good and cast aside the dross
Eclectic ! Bring the baskets ! Gather up
The gods and devils, the cosmogonies,
The myths and tales of wonder-mongering
scribes,

The dullard chronicles of priests and kings,
The men of God's own heart ungibbeted,
The axes red and wet with sacrifice,
The stars, the crosses, and the sepulchers !
Preserve the fragments of my meager feast
To feed your starveling followers withal,
Whose taste for living Truth is not so nice !

Believe in God ! Not one that I can think,
Nor one that words of thine can name me,
Priest ;

Much less a petty tyrant of the skies
Born in the shallow brains of one rude clan
And throned above the godlings of the rest
By brutalslaughter. Men have made their gods
In their own image, mingled best and worst.

MY CREED.

You cut the garment of the Universe
Too small, too antic, for a masquerade
More fit! But make it whole, without a seam:
I'll wear it, wrap it round my little life,
Nor ask it purple, broidered round with gold!

The All is not negation. Infinite Yea,
Than utter which unworthily, I'll pluck
My tongue away, and be forever mute,—
A boundless Affirmation, thou and I
But words, O Priest, and meaningless until
The last is uttered. Shall we guess the rest,
And swear our little guess is all in all? —
A Harmony whereof the simplest theme
Is yet unsung, and thou and I, O Priest,
But notes at random flung, discordant, harsh.
And shall we guess the burden of the theme,
And swear that we have learned the sym-
phony,
Rehearsed it through and through? Love all
thou canst,

MY CREED.

Dream all thou canst, strive all thou canst,
O Man,

And when the heart and brain and soul are
full

Of thoughts unutterable, name it God,
If names can tangle in a mesh of sound
The soul of that transcendent hour ! For me,
Be nameless, thou illimitable All !

Accept God's word ? A very cunning God,
To make a Book, whose every trivial text
Can damn a heretic or save a saint,
And yet, chameleon-like, take on the shade
Of each brand-new expounder ! Noble work !
The sheltering rock of every error known !
Curved mirror of the world without a focus !
What boots it if a god inspire the tale,
If truth must filter through the human brains
Of barbarous men, whose world was flat and
square,

Poured round by four huge rivers, like a sea,

Roofed o'er with crystal, set on pillars four,
With sun and moon and stars hung out for
signs,

A huge World-tabernacle built for man,
And filled with demons, a brute helpless realm
Devoid of order, where a whim was law
And cause confounded with supreme caprice?
But cleanse the filters, Priest ! Make sweet
and clean

The vessel that contains the Water of Life !
Distil and redistil with chemic skill
Its living spirit, lest it still be crude !

Poor groping groveling herd, that bring
their gifts

To gorge thee, Priest, with fatness and with
wine,

To clothe thee, not in hodden grey, like
theirs,

But purple and gold, for thy poor recom-
pense

MY CREED.

Of prayer and wrestling with a changeless god,
Who never heard a prayer in all the ages !
I pity them, so blind they spurn my pity
And hug their blessed chains and slavery,
But from the deepest springs of being flows
My pity, gilded Fraud, for thee, whose brain
Can catch the glimmer of the whitening
dawn,
Who know the Truth, thou Whited Sepul-
cher,
Yet feed upon their misery, and grind
Their lives between the mill-stones of thy
gods !
What name can measure thy stupidity,
Poor dumb vice-gerent of a helpless Ghost !
Or else, what name can sum the enormity
Of thy huge crime, thou Vampire of the
Night,
Sucking the life-blood from their nerveless
limbs,

MY CREED.

While fanning them to sleep with hopes of
heaven !

O *Nous* ! O mighty Mind ! O Reason
strong !

When shall we see thy glorious avatar ?

When shall thy light illumine this dark world
And beam resplendent from each upturned
face

That spurns its serfdom and adores thy star ?

Yet a few years ! The patient Age toils on,
And men and nations pass into decay,
But *Nous* keeps record of his constant gains,
And broods above his mighty victories
Imperishable ! Then at length shall come
A noble race, large-brained, warm-hearted,
free,

Whose heritage is Truth ! Thus age by age
The bible of our race is slowly writ,
Its texts inscribed in flame and blood and
tears.

MY CREED.

Each age inscribes its noblest word and dies.
The next outgrows it and lets fall a tear
On each mistake and blots it from the page.
God's word ? Man's rather ! Conquests of
his mind !

What tricks the thaumaturgic fancy plays
Within the madhouse of the mystic's brain !
O Priest, the image of thy risen Lord
Is but the Ideal of expanding Soul
That struggles to emancipate from pain
The writhing, torturing Real. And thy
boast

That he is lord of this last mighty age,
And Lord of lords for ages yet to be,
Is but an epitaph,—a fiction kind, —
The baseless tribute of a blinded zeal
That loves to gape in wonder at plain things,
And wrap them in a shroud of mystery !
Historic Jesus, good, forgotten man,
Whose ashes rest in peace in Galilee,

(O fortunate misfortune !) lowly born,
Obscurely living, mild-eyed Dreamer, mad
With thy celestial vision, fed with hopes
Of hopeless conquest, rise from out the
obscure,

And open those blind eyes which see not
thee !

Nay, rise not from obscure and dusty sleep
To wake them from their gilded dream !
For lo !

Thy slender genius is begodded now !
Thy name enthroned above the loftiest,
And millions worship their late-formed Ideal,
And name it thee ! O manifold vast Life,
Expansive Soul of man, why worship names
Whose bearers' best was but a slender brook
To our broad Niles of harvest-bearing thought?

O Man, thou mighty Herakles, awake,
Tear from thy quivering flesh the Nessus
shirt

MY CREED.

Whose venom poisons thee at every pore !
Hew down the deadly Hydra of misfaith,
And in his blood baptize thy wounded limbs
Till they are sheathed in horn, a firm defense
Against the shafts of scorn and strokes of
hate

Aimed by the blind old giant, Prejudice !

Go, leave me, Priest, thy proffered bread
and wine

Is bitterness of gall upon my tongue
And stench within my nostrils, as of blood
On sodden fields of death,— too small a price
To pay for kneeling to the lifted Host !
I am a living god ; my words are Life,
And Life abundant in the age to come
Will cast the burden of thy corpse-like
weight

From off the manly shoulders of our race
And free it from the pother of thy Gods !

My Dust.



When Life's subtle chemistry
Loses its power,
And in Death's triumph
My dust is but dust
What destiny ?

SHALL it feed a magnificent pine
In centennial woods,
Striving upward from gloom and darkness,
Mounting straight to the clear blue skies,
But pining and sighing
For heights it can never reach ?
I have been like a pine
In forest gloom,
Pining and sighing for far blue skies
And the unattainable heights.
Yet this is Life !

MY DUST.

Shall it feed a giant oak
And stand alone,
Struggling with Summer's stormwind
And grappling the thunderbolt,
Or gnarled and bare
Burdened with Winter's snow ?
I have been like an oak,
I have stood alone
With the stormwind and thunderbolt
And the cold cold snows.
And this is Life !

MY DUST.

Shall it feed the maize and the wheat
 Through bounteous moons,
Waving green in the summer breezes,
Waving gold in the autumn sun,
 Yielding bread
To be eaten in thanklessness ?
I have been like the grain
 With its green and its gold,
Growing and ripening till Autumn's sun
That a hungering world might eat.
 But this is Life !

MY DUST.

Shall it feed a perfect flower,
And peep from the grass,
Basking in Summer's sunshine,
Drinking the cool sweet dew,
And be plucked by Love
To lie on her bosom fair?
I have been like a flower
Low hid in the grass.
I have blossomed in sunshine and dew,
And lain on the bosom of Love.
And this is Life !

O Death, where is thy sting !
Though we die and are dust,
We shall live again,
Somehow. somewhere.
There is no death !



Fragment from Unpublished Masque.



WE say "Thank God!" and close the
ranked pearls

Behind our lips, lest echoes sound within
And wake the slumberer. Oh that the words
Were truly meant! In intellectual cold
We know ourselves a part of cosmic law
And view entranced the individual yield
His good, his being, that the whole may
thrive,

And cry with keen approval, like a god,
"Whatever is, is right!" But when the flood
Bursts from the hills and lays our fields in
ruin,

When earth-quake whelms our city with its
stroke,

FRAGMENT FROM UNPUBLISHED MASQUE.

When pestilence robs us of friends we loved
Or blights our comeliness with hateful scars,
We straight complain, and curse the woful day
That gave us being. Are we then so great
That God must be a fellow in our play
And stop his spinning worlds to humor us ?

Shine's yonder star but to dispel my dark ?
Beams yonder orb with pale reflected light
But to compel my thoughts to love and
peace ?

Stands this firm rock but to support my feet ?
Roars yonder Ocean in his bellowing caves
But to delight with song my greedy ear ?
Though it were written in ten thousand books
And graven deep on tables of hewn stone
That all this world of worlds was built for man,
I'd hold it still a fable born of pride.

The stars are bawbles. Earth's a bawble. All
Are gilded bawbles. Man's a bawble too.
And why make bawbles for a bawble's sport?

I know, if purpose be a law of things,
We move to some far-off diviner goal
Than seers have dreamed. Men are but
 incidents,

But dust disturbed a moment in the march
Of the Omnipotent,— then dust again.

If Thy divine intent doth traverse mine,
I thank Thee, knowing all is right with Thee.

I know? What can I know? What is it
 to know?

To comprehend a thing and fix its bounds?
Whose limits can I fix but mine own soul's?
I think. I am. So much, no more, I know.
And he who claims a larger ken, presumes,
Transmutes his fancies into truth! O Faith,
O truest Truth, but hair's-breadth wide of
 knowledge,

Thou art not knowledge, but the life of
 life!

And yet the seed of error lies in thee

That springs and spreads its poisonous Upas
shade

Above Earth's loveliest ! O life ! O blight !
We live by faith. Then faith must build her
eyrie

On juts of granite truth lit by the sun.

O Thou, the Many-named, matchless Un-
known,

What Thy pure essence is none knows save
Thee.

To me, Thou art but me idealized,
But me grown mighty, stripped of Space and
Time,

I made Thee in my image glorified !
And Thou unending Cosmos — world of
worlds —

Art me, transformed, unstripped of Space
and Time,

I made Thee what thou art by thinking Thee !
And when Night calleth unto Night sublime,

And Day doth utter knowledge unto Day,
And all proclaim Thy glorious handiwork
My soul, not they, is speaking ! Thunder-
bolts

That rive thy ancient cedars, Lebanon,
And bellow thousand-echoed on thy hills
Are voiceless till I give them human speech !
Thy flood, old Nilus, is but fated silt
Till I have named thee the Beneficent,
The Harvest-bearer ! All the varied speech
Of visible Nature, sung by bards of Old,
All revelations of the Infinite Will,
Are monologues of Soul, that hears en-
tranced

Her own pure melody resound from all.

Aye thus have sprung the sweetest flowers
of faith,
Half choked with noxious weeds, indigenous
To this same fruitful valley. Weeds and
flowers !

FRAGMENT FROM UNPUBLISHED MASQUE.

The task of ages is to purge Maremma
Of foulness, and choke out the thrift of
weeds

That hide the lily's whiteness and perfume !
I am Thy Gardener, O God, self-set,
To trim Thy valley's wild luxuriance !



A Gorden of Sonnets.



Christus.

THE pure heart is the Christus. Not alone
To the star-heralded Judean came
The Ineffable Presence, from the common
shame

Of low ideals into baseness grown
Lifting to boundless faith and selflessness.

It comes, the immanent God, to every soul
That struggles upward to the perfect goal
Where love is all and self is nothingness.
With time the old faith broadens to the new.

The Christus is not one alone, but all
Who dare in loving trust to struggle through
To deep soul-peace, true to the inward call,
Though bearing crosses and sharp crowns of
thorn.

In such as these the Lord Christ is reborn.



Truth, The Redeptor.

TRUTH is the soul's redeptor. Human
blood

Out gushing on ten thousand Calvaries
From very gods in deathless agonies,
Can not atone by its empurpling flood
For one weak fault of thine. Evil and Good,—
Intrinsic deeds, intrinsic purposes,—
Are not vicarious things. Purpureal seas
Can not, though fed from streams on Holy
Rood,
Wash white another's sin, make evil good,
Or purchase back to men lost purity.
O Man, be true to thine own soul's self-hood,
And the great purchase-price is paid for
thee !

The bitter wine-press of all wrath is trod,
And thou art free to stand before thy God.



Faith.

THE eyes of God ! O fond idolater,
For thee and me his eyes are thine and
mine !

The God we glibly talk of and define,
We chiseled out. The great Consolator
Who thrones in cloud above Earth's misery,
For aught we *know*, is grand but empty
fiction

Of souls that struggle on through deep
affliction,
And hope till faith believes the rêvery !
We grope in night, and all we know is feeling.
Yet, Soul, dream on, and build me gods
and shrines

And hopes that warm heart's-blood incar-
nadines !
Such things are faith to live by, full of healing,
And toil by daily in the direst need,
But not to swear by in an iron creed.



Atonement.

ATONEMENT is the perfect self-sur-
render

Of man's finiteness to the Infinite,
No passive task, but manhood's choicest
right,

In consecrated thought and toil to render
Each day its fulness of glad services,
And with diviner instincts move the will,
Instilling it with larger ends, until
Its meanest purpose with His thought agrees.
How mean the fiction of the Most High God
In his lone wrathful majesty enthroned,
Demanding justice of a race disowned,
At length appeased by the bleeding feet that
trod,

Spotless of guilt, to death on Calvary !
Just God, forgive the age-long blasphemy !



Resurrection.

WHEN soul is prisoned in an ancient
thought

As in a tower no broader than the age

That fashioned it, when, purblind, every sage
Looks back for truth, and counts the future
naught,

When scholars pore for years o'er musty
books

To find the fashion and the form of truth,
Fire-eyed, majestic, in his purple youth,
The new Age thunders godlike, "*Fiat Lux!*"
The star-winged Bard takes up the trumpet
blast ; —

"Beat down the towers, crumble stone
from stone,

Look forward, cast aside the ancient scroll,
No creed, no word is e'er the best and last !"

Within the walls the emancipating tone
I hear, and then 'tis Easter in my soul !



The Everlasting Life.

I KNOW no Blessed Isles beyond the main,
Nor Island Valley of Avilion,
Where disembodied spirits still live on,
Nor change nor die nor suffer any pain !
I only know the throbbings of my brain
Are deathless as Apollo's beams of Dawn.
And so I toil till his light is withdrawn,
Though winds of Fate blow keen with hail
and rain.
I am a part of Cosmic Force, and come
From Everlasting, swayed by brazen Doom.
In moulding worlds some godlike part I bear.
I know not wherefore, yet cannot despair,
Somehow, somewhere, in deathless cycles
drawn,
This Life that lives in me shall still live on.



Transfiguration.

THE spirit grows by action. Each new
thought,

Each purpose held in reason's firm control,
Each deed by persevering nobly wrought,
By cumulative force upbuilds the soul.

Daily the gradual transformation grows

Out of dead self to living selflessness,
Divesting soul of her deceptive shows,

And clothing her in simple perfectness.

And thus ascending to the summit grand,

Old comradeships that charmed are back-
ward cast,

Forsaken as the higher life unfolds,

And as great thoughts and purposes expand,

In purple sunset glow, the soul, at last,

Herself, transfigured as a god, beholds.



Immortality.

I SAID that Life is but the tissue's change,
And thought but subtle chemistry of
brain,
That learned doctors' ponderous tomes
make plain,
Our life is but the amoeba's narrow range
From death through life to death again. At
length
I paused before an open grave, the goal
Of funeral pomp for my dead love. My soul,
Wringing from anguish keen exultant
strength,
Cried ; " Vain are all man's cold philosophies,
His ponderous tomes are monstrous cruel lies!
Surreit Amor!" Aye beside the tomb
The flower of Immortality doth bloom !
Yet would my soul could once for all decide,
If Reason faltered, or Affection lied !



Calvary.

NO truth is won save on the tragic crest
Of new-climbed Calvaries, where the
bawling mob,

Whose wildered hearts with nameless ter-
ror throb,

Pursue with clubs and staves who dared divest
Their world of one more shadow, fearing lest
The unwonted light should make the uni-
verse

Too luminous to hold a God, or worse,
Should fill men's souls with generous unrest
Until at length their fathers' ancient faiths
Grew all uncouth though builded on "God-
saiths."

For each new syllable of Truth we learn
A prophet dies, and all along the line
Of its triumphant course, the martyrs burn,
But Truth is God's Light, quenchless and
divine.



Ekklesia.

A GOTHIC sheep-fold, and a well-fed flock,
God snugly housed and hedged all round
about,

And all the ragged waifs of Earth pent out
Lest their rude cries of sin and shame should
mock

The long-aisled sanctity, and lo ! a Church !
Do gothic windows shut in God, or keep
In cushioned Sabbath ease his chosen
sheep ?

Go rather to the wilderness and search !
God is as wide and deep as heaven and earth,
His sheep-fold is the teeming universe,
His priests and prophets those high souls of
worth

That lift from toiling millions their hard
curse

Of penury and sin. When understood
The Church is joyous human brotherhood.



Gethsemane.

TO watch the tragedy of life, that moves
Upon this stage, from each new curtain-
lift,
Through all the hurrying scenes that
change and shift
With harrow and alack of wounded loves,
And silken culture jostled with the droves
Of unkempt helplessness, as fall the dice
Of Fate, Good throttled in the clutch of
Vice,—
Cold adders coiling round the nests of
doves,—
Till the curtain falls upon an empty stage,
And the vain show is done,— to sit and
watch,
A helpless spectator of misery
All throbbing with divine will to assuage
The endless agony,— to wait and watch,—
This is thy midnight hour, Gethsemane !



Olivet.

THE Truth shines outward and not in.
The whole
Wide vasty space of star-sown heavens
can wake
No thought, no sense, nor new ideal make
Whose germ lay not potential in the soul.
The soul is but infolded Truth, its goal
The long unfolding for its own high sake,
And life's rude conflict crowned with pain
and ache
The unclasping of the folds as they unroll !
Thus, age by age, the light grows more serene
And white, as each new prophet's torch is seen
On higher Olivets, and the firm soul,
With radiant face, points upward to the goal,
Excelsior ! Ring out the vanward call
Till, beatific, Truth is all in all !



The Paraklete.

WHEN dark Despair, in some lone sceptic hour,
Breathes on the Soul his noxious atmosphere,
And gulfs of night are yawning deep and near,
And storm-clouds of black Death and Doom
do lower,
And all the lights of heaven feel the power
Of blight and pestilence, and all men hear
The croak of ravens ominous and clear,
And life is withered ere it come to flower,
O mighty Soul of Manhood, Spirit strong,
O Paraklete, O Light unquenchable,
Faith, Hope and Love, triumphant over
wrong,
O Graces most serene, of life most full,
O triune Strength of Soul, to cheer and bless,
Thou wilt not leave us wholly comfortless !



Hypatia.

HYPATIA, spotless virgin, vestal-pure,
Stripped of her chaste Ionic robe of
snow,

Struck down by monks of Nitria, below
The image of the pitying Christ ! Adjure
The host to spare her, young Philammon !
Vain !

The black mob surge upon the altar rail
To glut her blood ! One wild despairing
wail

Parts her white lips. Philosophy is slain !
Orestes, lo ! thy work and Cyril's ! Thou
With unchaste purpose and perfidious vow
Hast lured the Teacher from her Academe,
To grace the ruin of thy fatal dream
Of power. Cyril has made his sacrifice
Of heathen blood. O God, was this
thy price ?



To a Serpent.

I.

POOOR timid creature gliding through the
grass,

A tortuous beam of purple-mailed light,
Fleeing from man thy old arch-slanderer's
sight

To seek asylum till his foot shall pass !

I hate thee not, poor harmless friend, like men

That pause in serious toil to mangle thee,
For thou hast still some slight divinity,

Though lurking in the slime of this dark fen,
Unwinged and songless, in perpetual dew

Of foulness, and mayhap in Life's great plan

Thou hast as fair a use as they that span
Bright wings and hover in ethereal blue,

Pulsating clouds of vocal deity

To burst in floods of rapturous melody.

II.

Nor will I charge thee with the floods of sin
That welter round the tangled lives of men
With poisonous airs from Death's wide
stagnant fen,

Until I learn where Good and Ill begin.
And yet, poor hapless wight, thou art to
me—

Since the world-hoary myth hath made
thee so—

The symbol of innumerable woe
And deep immeasurable misery!
I hate old Envy's poisoned fangs that kill
Content, and Slander's red and odious
tongue,

And dark Suspicion writhing swift among
Fair names, besliming noble hearts, but still,
I hate thee not. Away, unharmed and
free,

And may my serpent thoughts escape
with thee!

The Birth of a God.



THOU mighty Silence in the roar of
worlds,

Majestic, moveless in the drift of Time,
Fixed End and Altitude of things, with Thee
The soul is calm. To Thee, with choice sub-
lime,

Through deathless conquest of appearances,
And gentle march athwart chaotic Night
And leaden headlong-hurling Institutes,
Through frozen palaces of formal ice,
Mid world-old constitutions, codes and
creeds,—

The serpent-slough of ancient yesterdays,—
She mounts, star-eyed for primal Truth and
Light,

Star-pinioned strong for heaven-scaling flight
Beyond the dark obscure, star-shod to climb

From world abysses o'er the crags of Time !
Impelled by kinship with the primal Good,
She sweeps magnetic from her nether orb,
Far-mounting unto Thee, at one with Thee,
In Thy repose, cloud-girdled! Having touched
The midmost Sun of the celestial fires,
As once Prometheus, she at length shall
stand

Embodied Fire,—a portent to the Age,—
A wild rock Pharos lit by Titan hands,
Wide flashing through the void Immensities
Of Space and Time, from its firm-centred
rest,—

Foreboding swift convulsion and wide wreck
And palingenesis to nobler life !
Thus, one by one, on missions of uplift,
Great Souls are born, and, with compulsion
strong,

Bring Order out of Chaos, and behold !
The Chaos owns a Hero and a God !

Agnosticism.



I KNOW not if there be,
Following invisibly,
Angels protecting me,
Nor would I care,
Though cohorts of celestial spies
With Argus eyes
Should wheel about me in the cool sweet air !

I know not if there be,
Ruling almightily,
A Judge approving me,
Nor would I care,
Though from his cloud-engirdled throne
In thunder tone
He hurled me curses through the vibrant air !

AGNOSTICISM.

I only know there be
Things that my soul should flee
To live exaltedly,
And these I dare,
Though God and his hosts celestial
Desert me all,
To loathe and shun like pestilential air !

I only know there be
Voices that speak to me
Out of Life's mystery,
And these I dare
To hear, though heaven's high tribunal
Proclaim them all
The lying hiss of demons in God's pure air !



Thoughts.



I.

THAT the dead are dead and the living
are here

Is the obvious stern reality,
However we dream of fair realms beyond
And chatter of immortality !

II.

What is the prophet's dream to me ?
What is the stroke of the psalmist's lyre ?
When the bosom of love has ceased to heave
And the broken eyes have lost their fire ?

III.

The parting is over,—the keenest pang,—
We meet no more till the close of day,
And then if we're left to moulder alone,
What more can be suffered ? 'Tis over
for aye !

THOUGHTS.

IV.

The sense of living is stronger than thought,
The sense of loss is stronger than dreams,
And the visions that float through a mist of
tears
Are cold and chill as the Stygian stream's.

V.

Dearer to me is the simple creed
That the all of living is to be just,
Whether the end be gates of pearl
Or only a handful of worthless dust.

VI.

Despite the best words ever sung,
The grave has a smell of dust and mould,
And the heart that is beating fast and warm
Shrinks from the everlasting cold.



My Pious Comforters.



YOU wish I could think like you? It would
comfort me in my grief
To rest in the arms of Faith, and learn God's
sweet relief?
For Death is a door, you say, and not an
impassable wall,
And the ears of Faith can hear, from beyond,
the immortals' call?
Dear soul, you may mean it well! It will
do, perchance, for you,
But I'd scream and rend my hair, if I thought
your dream were true!
A door? Aye, an open door, and I know
not what beyond,
But my head is all too clear, and my heart is
all too fond,
To divide that realm, like you, into fields of
glory and blight,
Where the saved look down on the lost, with
a burst of wild delight.

Could I look on that dear dead face turned
tenderly to me
With the lips just parting the whiskers, those
lips that seemed to be
Made for all kindness and kissing, and think
about Death, like you ?
For I know how he lived and toiled, and what
he had striven to do.
He wasn't quite sure, himself, that priest
and bishop knew
Each nook and corner of heaven and the
narrow way thereto.
You'd say, he blasphemed at times, and
laughed at holy things,—
At the pious fudge of the world, in its infant's
leading-strings,—
And his brain was clear and strong, and his
heart was brave and warm,
And he basked in the sun of life, and braved
its wildest storm,
For he saw that the best of living is living
here and now,
Whether a fillet of gold, or a thorn-crown,
pressed the brow.

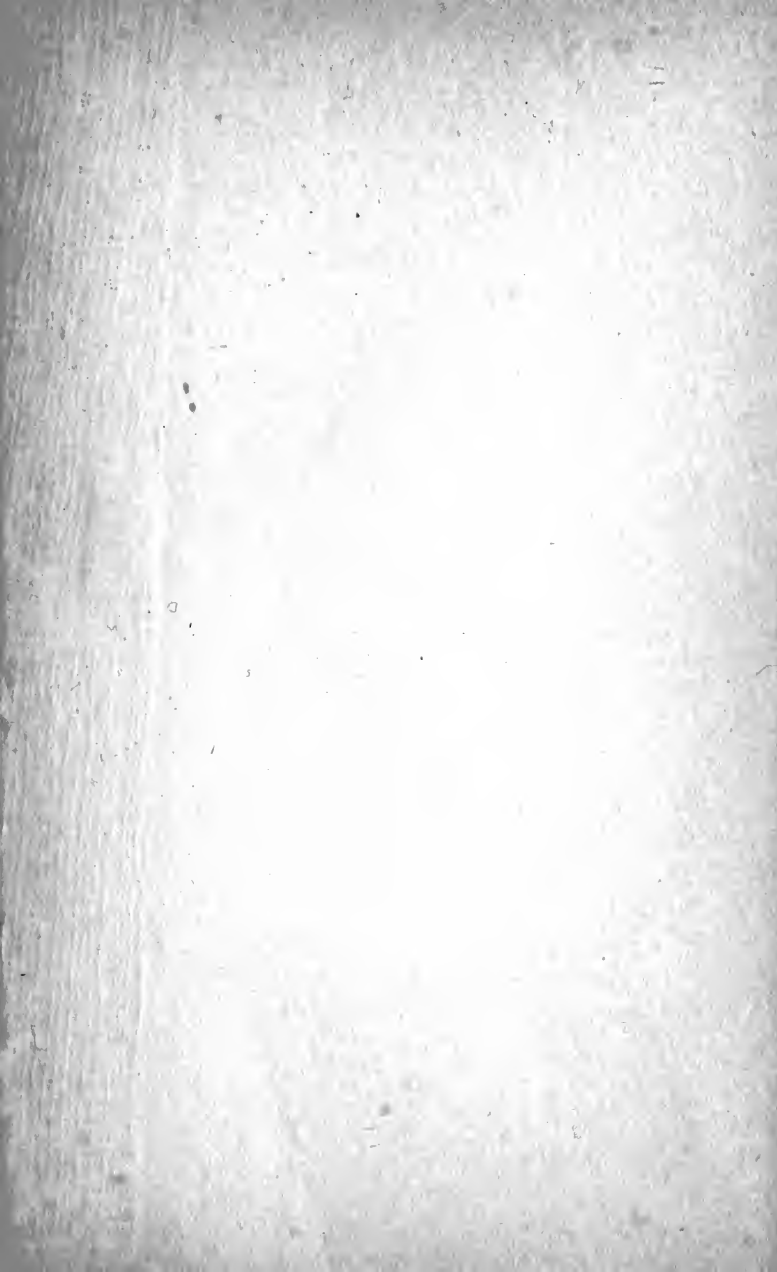
If I thought like you, I would know, that his
soul this very night
Had entered that—Father, sweet Father!
I kneel in the failing light,
By thy side, poor broken Eyes, and swear
that wherever thou art,
I will follow thee, where thou art, and bear
of thy fate my part,
And love thee, and serve thee, and shield
thee, a dutiful daughter and true,
To the last and forever and ever!—Is that
any comfort to you
To drive a daughter to madness? The faith
of my father is best,
For heaven were turned into hell, for me,
without all the rest
Of the loved ones that founded the home
and nourished its altar fires
With quenchless love and trust and devotion
that never tires.
Agnostic? And do I not dread the future?
So unprepared?
Shall I dread the sweet sleep of that Sleeper?
The sleep my mother has shared?

MY PIOUS COMFORTERS.

For she rests under the ferns, and the
myrtle creeps through the grass
As sweetly to-day as if priests had hallowed
it with their mass.
Two unbaptized babes are sleeping beside
her there,
All doomed, if I thought like you, beyond a
hope or a prayer.
If I dreamed for a moment to-day that I were
going to heaven,—
Your heaven,— and all my faults and failings
would be forgiven,
And I knew that far away in those dungeons
of despair
My father and mother were tortured, beyond
my love and care,
I would do some horrible deed, some daring
and dreadful thing,
And slay myself, and fly to them both on
swiftest wing,
And descend to abysmal gloom, with the
vision of heaven above,
And glory in winning hell, for the sake of
the ones I love !



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